

Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00

DOTE-00 FMC-02 INR-07 NSAE-00 CG-00 OFA-01 DLOS-05

FEA-01 /046 W

----- 116836

R 301102Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9730

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

UNCLAS KUALA LUMPUR 2343

LONDON FOR MARATT

TOKYO FOR MARATT

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EWWT ENRG MY

SUBJ: LABUAN, SABAH, TO HARBOR LAID-UP TANKERS

1. WITH THE PERMISSION AND COOPERATION OF THE STATE OF SABAH'S MARINE DEPARTMENT A GOOD SIZE AREA IN THE NORTHERN PART OF BRUNEI BAY NEAR LABUAN HAS BEEN ASSIGNED TO SERVE AS A PARKING AREA FOR SURPLUS OIL TANKERS.

2. THE AREA, CENTERED AT FIVE DEGREES TEN MINUTES NORTH, ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTEEN DEGREES TWENTY MINUTES EAST, IS FULLY SHELTERED AND HAS A WATER DEPTH OF TWELVE TO SIXTEEN FATHOMS. THE BOTTOM IS VERY GOOD HOLDING GROUND. THE TOTAL AREA IS ABOUT TWELVE SQUARES MILES, AND, ACCORDING TO THE DIRECTOR OF THE MARINE DEPARTMENT, CAN EASILY HOLD THE DOZEN SHIPS WHICH THE DEPARTMENT WILL ALLOW TO ANCHOR THERE. HE SAID THAT THE AREA WOULD BE EXPANDED TO ACCOMODATE MORE SHIPS IF THE DEMAND WERE SUFFICIENT. AS OF THE MIDDLE OF APRIL ONLY ONE TANKER IS ACTUALLY USING THE FACILITY. THE 60,000 DEAD WEIGHT TON (DWT) SHELL-OWNED "SEPIA" ANCHORED IN EARLY APRIL AND REDUCED HER THIRTY MAN CREW TO NINE CARETAKERS.

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3. THE SHELL 195,000 DWT "MARINULA" IS EXPECTED TO ARRIVE SHORTLY. IN ADDITION, SHELL HAS PROVIDED THE MARINE DEPARTMENT WITH A LIST OF TEN ADDITIONAL TANKERS TO BE LAID-UP. A SHELL OFFICIAL SAID THAT THE COMPANY EXPECTS TO LAY-UP OFF LABUAN VESSELS TOTALING OVER TWO MILLION DWT'S. THE "MARINULA" WILL ACT AS FLAG SHIP FOR THE FLEET AND AS DORMITORY FOR THE CARETAKER CREWMEN. ONE OF THE SHIPS, UNNAMED, IS A 350,000 DWT TANKER WHICH HAS NEVER CARRIED A LOAD OF OIL. SHE IS ON A SHAKEDOWN CRUISE NOW AND AFTER THE TEST RUN WILL SAIL TO THE LABUAN ANCHORAGE TO JOIN THE OTHER SHIPS.

4. THE AREA IS NOT RESTRICTED TO USE ONLY BY SHELL. OTHER, UNNAMED, FOREIGN COMPANIES HAVE MADE INQUIRIES TO THE MARINE DEPARTMENT ABOUT THE FACILITIES AND ITS COSTS. CURRENT FEES ARE M\$0.13 (U.S. \$1 EQUALS M\$2.27) FOR LIGHT AND BUOY FEES ON ARRIVAL AND M\$0.01 A GROSS TON EACH MONTH AS PORT AND HARBOR FEES. THE MARINE DEPARTMENT REQUIRES THAT A CERTIFIED OFFICER BE ASSIGNED TO THE SHIP AND AN ANCHOR WATCH BE MAINTAINED. SOME SABAHANS WILL PROBABLY BE HIRED TO SUPPLEMENT THE CREW. THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF THE LABUAN FACILITIES LIES IN THE AVAILABILITY OF SHELTERED, DEEP WATER ANCHORAGE, THE CLOSE PROXIMITY TO THE NORTH BORNEO-JAPAN AND MIDDLE EAST-JAPAN TANKER ROUTES, AND REASONABLE HARBOR FEES. FOR SHELL THE EXISTENCE OF SUPPORT FACILITIES AT ITS INSTALLATIONS IN BRUNEI, SARAWAK, AND SABAH PROVIDE AN ADDITIONAL ADVANTAGE. THERE IS ONLY A LIMITED AMOUNT OF FRESH WATER AVAILABLE FROM LABUAN TO SUPPLY THE SHIPS: HOWEVER, THIS SHOULD NOT POSE MUCH OF A PROBLEM SINCE EACH SHIP CAN BRING ENOUGH TO LAST A COUPLE OF YEARS IF NEED BE. ALL SHIPS ANCHORED IN THE AREA WILL BE IN BALLAST AND WILL NOT BE USED FOR FLOATING STORAGE.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PETROLEUM, SHIPS, SHIPYARDS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 30 APR 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975KUALA02343
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750152-0845
From: KUALA LUMPUR
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t1975044/aaaaadht.tel
Line Count: 93
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EB
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ShawDG
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 25 NOV 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <25 NOV 2003 by MaustMC>; APPROVED <30 DEC 2003 by ShawDG>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: LABUAN, SABAH, TO HARBOR LAID-UP TANKERS
TAGS: EWWT, ENRG, MY
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006